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**NOAA RELEASES DETAILED MAPS OF CORAL REEFS  
IN AMERICAN SAMOA, GUAM  
AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, today announced the availability of a Web site and CD-ROM which provides digital geographic information system data, maps, and satellite imagery depicting the location and distribution of shallow-water seafloor habitats for American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The information is made available by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment.

"The availability of the images, maps and data represents a major milestone towards the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force's recommendation to develop shallow-water coral reef ecosystem maps for all U.S. waters by 2009," said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

Available at [http://biogeo.nos.noaa.gov/products/us\\_pac\\_terr/order.shtml](http://biogeo.nos.noaa.gov/products/us_pac_terr/order.shtml), the product is the fifth in a series of digital maps that characterize bottom habitats. The maps have been produced by CCMA and its partners for U.S. jurisdictions, including Florida; Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; the main eight Hawaiian Islands and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Efforts are also underway to update the benthic habitats of Florida and to explore mapping coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. Freely Associated States, including the Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The recently completed maps are characterized by unprecedented accuracy and detail, and represent the first comprehensive assessment of benthic habitats of the shallow water environments (less than 99 feet water depth) for these Pacific Island Territories. Thirty-four distinct benthic habitat types (e.g., patch reef, unconsolidated sediment, etc.) within eleven unique ecological zones (e.g., lagoon, reef crest, etc.) were mapped directly into a GIS using visual interpretation of satellite images. In all, CCMA delineated and mapped approx. 174 square miles of unconsolidated sediment, approx. 76 square miles of submerged vegetation, and approx. 51 square miles of coral reef and colonized hardbottom.

CCMA's benthic habitat maps have seen a variety of management applications since the first products were delivered in 2001 (Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands), including identifying no-anchor zones within U.S. National Park Service marine parks and monuments and assessing marine resource abundance and distribution inside and outside of marine protected areas (MPAs).

The maps are also used for evaluating and citing potential MPAs, and developing coral ecosystem monitoring strategies. Maps and associated data products coupled with a robust archive of marine biological data collected in the field by CCMA and its many regional partners, provide an integrated data package that is a tremendous value to resource managers and academic scientists alike.

NOAA's National Ocean Service is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. It balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

An agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing

environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA's National Ocean Service: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/>

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS): <http://coastalscience.noaa.gov>

Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment (CCMA):

<http://coastalscience.noaa.gov/monitoring-assessment>

CCMA maps and data products: [http://biogeo.nos.noaa.gov/products/us\\_pac\\_terr/](http://biogeo.nos.noaa.gov/products/us_pac_terr/)